

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (withdrawn) A method for fabricating a gas turbine engine combustor, said method comprising:

coupling a venturi to a primary swirler; and

coupling the venturi to a secondary swirler such that a gap is defined between a portion of the venturi and a portion of one of the primary swirler and the secondary swirler.

2. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein coupling the venturi to a secondary swirler comprises coupling the venturi to the secondary swirler such the venturi is coupled between the primary and secondary swirlers and such that a slide fit is defined between at least a portion of the venturi and a portion of one of the primary and secondary swirlers.

3. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein coupling the venturi to a secondary swirler comprises coupling the venturi to one of the primary swirler and the secondary swirler using at least one of a brazing operation and a welding operation.

4. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein one of the primary swirler and the secondary swirler defines a flow passage extending therethrough, said method further comprises forming a plurality of openings extending in flow communication between the flow passage and the gap.

5. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising coating the portion of the venturi defining the gap with a thermal barrier coating.

6. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein coupling the venturi to a secondary swirler further comprises coupling the venturi to the secondary swirler such that the venturi extends between the primary and secondary swirlers.

7. (currently amended) A combustor for a gas turbine engine, said combustor comprising:

~~a venturi comprising an upstream portion, a downstream portion and a middle portion extending therebetween; and~~

a secondary swirler ~~extending defining an air passage~~ circumferentially around said ~~venture~~ venturi, said secondary swirler coupled to said venturi to ~~facilitate preventing a flow of fuel between a radially inner surface of said secondary swirler and a radially outer surface of said venturi at said upstream and downstream portions, such that a gap is defined between said a radially inner surface of said secondary swirler and said a radially outer surface of said venturi middle portion, wherein at least one opening extends from said radially inner surface through said radially outer surface to direct air from said air passage into said gap.~~

8. (original) A combustor in accordance with Claim 7 further comprising a primary swirler coupled to said venturi such that said venturi is between said primary and secondary swirlers.

9. (original) A combustor in accordance with Claim 8 wherein at least a portion of said venturi is slidably coupled to a portion of one of said primary and said secondary swirlers.

10. (original) A combustor in accordance with Claim 8 wherein at least a portion of said venturi is coupled to a portion of one of said primary and said secondary swirlers in a slide fit, said slide fit facilitates accommodating thermal growth of at least one of said primary and said secondary swirler with respect to said venturi.

11. (canceled)

12. (previously presented) A combustor in accordance with Claim 7 wherein said venturi radially outer surface comprises a layer of thermal barrier coating.

13. (original) A combustor in accordance with Claim 7 wherein said gap facilitates reducing an operating temperature of said venturi.

14. (currently amended) A gas turbine engine comprising a combustor comprising an annular air swirler and an annular venturi, ~~said annular venturi comprising an upstream portion, a downstream portion and a middle portion extending therebetween, said annular air swirler defines an air passage and is coupled to said venturi to facilitate preventing a flow of fuel between a radially inner surface of said annular air swirler and a radially outer surface of said annular venturi at said upstream and downstream portions, such~~

that a gap is defined between said a radially inner surface of said air swirler and said a radially outer surface of said venturi middle portion, wherein at least one opening extends from said radially inner surface through said radially outer surface to direct air from said air passage into said gap.

15. (original) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said gap facilitates reducing an operating temperature of said venturi.

16. (previously presented) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein at least a portion of said annular air swirler is coupled in a slide fit against said venturi.

17. (canceled)

18. (original) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said gap facilitates maintaining an operating temperature of said venturi below a predetermined temperature.

19. (original) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said gap facilitates reducing coking of said venturi.

20. (previously presented) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said combustor further comprises a primary swirler, said venturi coupled between said primary swirler and said annular air swirler.